

# The System Sol

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Summary: In times of fear, a position on a remote outpost is better than a brutal slaughter. However, it seems one marine cannot escape the bloodlust of the Covenant war machine. [Rated for language and violence.]

## 1. On the Fringe

Author's Note: As always, this is dedicated to my wonderful girlfriend who inspires me to wake-up every morning and never fear the future. I love you, honey. Thank you for staying with me through everything.

Also, bad writer warning. x3

x-X-x

There was only darkness and silence in the small cell. Its single inhabitant drew shallow, dry breaths as stagnant air pushed down into his lungs. The thick air tormented the young man to breathe it, with each breath came the sting from the diminutive irritants that lingered in the cell. It was a never ending nightmare and he didn't have to open his eyes to know he was curled on the same cot, in the same ship and heading towards a dead-end assignment. He dreamt brightly of his future, deep inside knowing it would be as dank as the room.

He sat in thought, wondering where in the solar system the ship was, how close to Pluto. As if on cue to answer the question, the cell door's electronic locks clicked open and blinding light flooded through the room. Then for what felt like the first time in years he heard something besides his own breathing. A pair of footsteps moved with haste towards him. Then a voice, deep and rough, but also insecure masked false authority.

"Prisoner 731, this is your stop. Prepare to disembark," it commanded harshly.

Prisoner 731 was more than happy to comply, but lacked the strength and speed the speaker wished. Within several seconds of the command, the speaker rammed a blunt object, a rifle butt, into the prisoner's back. Pain arced along Prisoner 731's back, pushing the air and a violent cough from him. Before he could recover, a set of rough hands gripped the prisoner's tank-top, pulling him off the cot.

There the young man was face to face with a the hardened facial features of a marine. For a split second the marine's gaze willed fearful tears to well into the prisoner's green eyes, but before he was broken, the marine forced the prisoner's head to one side as the second pushed a scanner against the young man's neck.

"Prisoner 731, Jamie Carpenter," the marine with the scanner confirmed, "This is our guy."

Jamie didn't have the time to regain his bearings. He was forcefully dragged from the containment cell into the corridor leading to freedom. The hall was completely different from the cell, it was bright and the air filtered. The light caused Jamie to clinch his eyes close and tears of pain rolled down his cheeks and the clean air working as a filter, caused him to cough phlegm from his damaged lungs. He tried to stop, double over and let the thick liquid drop from his mouth. Jamie's captor however refused to allow it and the marine pulled Jamie violently down the hall.

Further down the corridor the two men came to an automated door, the arrow painted on the ground before it reading 'showers.' The marine pulling Jamie punched the doors code into the keypad, then pushed Jamie inside.

"You have five minutes. I'd make sure you are clean."

When the door shut, Jamie undressed and rushed to a shower. He turned the water on and let the warm flow wash the grime from his lithe body. The young man quickly grabbed a shampoo bottle, lathering his shoulder length black hair and scrubbed it thoroughly clean, then proceeded to wash his body.

By the time Jamie had finished, he calculated that two of his five minutes remained. He leaned against the tile wall and let the water relax his aching muscles. He heaved a sign and looked towards the ceiling, simply wanting to collapse and sleep soundly. A light buzz filled the room, but abruptly stopped as the lighting in the ship died. Within a few short, eerie seconds, the lights and the buzz returned to the room.

"A true piece of Navy patchwork," Jamie mumbled to himself, his voice barely audible from the lack of recent use.

After the he dressed in fresh UNSC BDU, Jamie went back out into the hall and willingly followed the hostile marine into the hanger bay. The young man was then ushered to a waiting Pelican Dropship, which promptly lifted-off once preparations were complete.

There where several other prisoners besides Jamie on board, the UNSC unwilling to throw able bodied soldiers into prison and forget about them. They needed every human they could get to fight the Covenant and odds of survival even then were slim. Jamie never tried to think about it, the thought of species wide extinction made him shudder

with uncertainty.

He quickly pushed the thoughts to the back of his mind, closing his eyes and returning to the paradise he dreamed so frequently about. He felt acceleration, deceleration, twists and turns. Before Jamie wanted it, the troopship had arrived.

The Pelican's bay doors opened and unloaded the handful of men, Jamie being the last out. He stepped onto the dock of Installation No. 0005, A Plutonian mining facility. As the Pelican's rear door closed slowly Jamie caught the tail end of the pilot's checklist.

"Why did the radar just cut out? I can't get it back," the pilot said in confusion.

It didn't matter to Jamie, he was in his own little slice of the universe, the war machine would never near him. He watched the Pelican dust-off, hopefully the last time he'd ever see a machine of combat.

A/N: There it is chapter one. Boring and poorly written, I know. I just wanted to get something down and get some feedback. Dunno when I'll update, but it'll be sometime next week. Anyways, the poor quality is because lack of sleep. I'm normally a decent writer. Normally. Anyways, thanks for reading this thing. Bet it was as exciting as a grocery list.

## 2. Complications

1Jamie wondered why he had decided to come to such a backwater planet for assignment. Seeing the poor condition of the docks, he was beginning to regret the decision slightly. He would have guessed that facilities of this quality would fit here, but these docks were beyond bad repair. They were almost neglected.

Jamie's hair and loose black t-shirt began to flow and ripple and he turned his attention back to the Pelican. They were ready for dust-off, like Jamie had figured even the ships transporting goods out here were in poor repair. The dropship fired its engines and took off in a cloud of sediment that had collected, no doubt from whatever this place mined.

To be honest, the young man had never heard of this facility. Hell, he hadn't heard anything about the war, the UNSC or anything else since his imprisonment. Jamie had come to the solar system because the Covenant could never find it, they couldn't. Not with every security order in place and rigorously regulated. If they did this would be the first place they attacked, all the fringe worlds would be glassed by now. The thought of the enemy finding the center of human existence was unnerving. Jamie shook the thoughts from his head. He was safe and he needed to report to the local authorities to get his reassignment orders.

The walk to the immigration office was uneventful. It was only several hundred meters away and the dock looked the same. Workers checked boxes, moved cargo or tried to repair what they could of the structure. Jamie did however note that the area wasn't so much a traditional dock as a staging area. The dock and most likely the accompanying city was covered by a clear, thick dome. He hadn't seen

it applied often, but Jamie had worked with the material. It was plasteel, an incredibly clear plastic supported by heavy steel and it was virtually unbreakable by human weapons. He also noticed that the station used the Brooke filter system, which was an opening in the plastic that used high winds to keep the vacuum out but allow dropships to come in. All in all, the dock was a large concrete landing pad with various buildings and warehouses dotting the vast space.

The immigration center was within sight now. It looked like the rest of this place, a worn down and simple concrete building with it's purpose clearly painted beside the door. Jamie noted it was sloppily done and at an angle as he reached for the handle. He twisted the handle and pulled the door open, the door creaking loudly as rust fell from the hinges.

The office's interior was designed much like the UNSC ships. Cold metal floors, thick walls and lines of cushioned seats back to back. The only difference was the various recruitment ads, civilian posters and bulletin boards on the walls. Scatted along the rows of seats tables with magazines where available. There was also a holovid television screen broadcasting the news.

Jamie froze, staring at the screen wide-eyed. The headlines broadcasted "Second Covenant attack on Earth." Jamie walked to the screen, even climbing over the last row of seats in the process. There was no sound, but the scene explained it all. A field reporter stood against a backdrop of death and feral brutality. Jamie had no idea where the city was, he honestly didn't care. Behind the reporter, marines fired blindly towards an enemy they could not see. Wounded lay on the ground, their faces contorted with distress and anguish. When had this happened? Why did it happen? Jamie had stumbled into a war an astronomical amount worse then he had escaped it.

Jamie quickly spun around, looking for anyone else to confirm the reports of the horror he was watching. He was the only one from the Pelican dropship here, no one else was in the room. He was the only one stupid enough to show, the only one without knowledge of the events. He had to get out of this situation, he didn't want to be on the battlefield once more. However, before he could leave the office, a steel door open just a few feet from him. A middle aged man held it open, his eyes half closed and his lips in an apathetic frown.

"You are from the dropship. A new arrival?" he asked lazily.

There was no running from this. Jamie wasn't going to run from the authorities on this station, "Yes, I am," Jamie responded quietly. He would be caught if he ran and odds were he'd be sent to the front lines. On Earth.

The man nodded and motioned for Jamie to come inside the room, who in turn complied. Jamie walked into the room and the man closed the door behind him. The room was bland, a cheap desk with two equally cheap chair across from one another. An older model computer and messily scattered Jamie took a seat in one, the man the other. Jamie watched uneasily as the man reached for the computer's keyboard and began typing. The clack of the keys filled the room until the man stopped and looked up to Jamie.

"Jamie Carpenter, born December 16th, 2534," the man stopped, his brow furrowed and a corner of his mouth twisted upwards, "Homeworld: Unknown. Military history and rank: Erased. Medical records: Erased. Is this data...correct?"

"Yes, sir," Jamie quietly answered.

The man sighed and began typing once more, "Because you have some sort of military training, we'll put you on the station's self-defense force. Your dormitory is in block 4B, room 030. Take the tram from the exit and to your left, you can't miss it. After your arrival, report to Commander Garnett about your post and shift."

Jamie nodded and stood from the chair. The man gave him a dismissive wave of his hand, one more of annoyance than a farewell and Jamie took his leave. Jamie followed the man's instructions, making it to the tram just in time. It was the same as every one the UNSC used, basically an electric box train that never seemed to operate correctly. The doors opened with a hiss and Jamie stepped into the empty car, taking his seat near the rear of the car.

The train jumped to a rough start causing Jamie to jerk forward in his seat. Once the tram was stable, he leaned back in the seat and observed the world as he quickly passed it by. There was a quick ride through a small redwood forest, the environment surprisingly lush for being planted on such a far away planet. Then the train passed into an urban area almost immediately after the thick forest. It was the same as everywhere else, large skyscrapers that looked completely made from glass, busy traffic and bustling streets. After a few turns and stations down the line, an automated female voice informed the passengers they had arrived at Dormitory Block 4B.

Jamie pushed himself from the seat and stepped out onto the station platform. To his unpleasant surprise, this part of the city was cold, probably around freezing. Jamie rubbed his forearms and watched his breath as it caused a trail of steam from his mouth. He scanned the area and found an entrance into the dorm and hustled into the building. While he thought he'd get a temporary relief from the frigid air outside, he was horrified to discover inside the building wasn't much better.

Jamie made his way down the characterless hall and eventually found his room. He pulled down on the door's handle, entering the room with hopes of warmer air. To his disappointment, it wasn't much warmer. Or even nice for that matter.

The room was typical one for a UNSC shared room. Thin carpet, white washed walls, two small beds which connected with the walls while the rest of it floated freely and four footlockers. Jamie guessed he shared the room with someone on his shift and used it while the other two were on shift. Jamie however noticed something that was an invaluable asset. Near the door leading to the bathroom, a coat rack hung with one cold weather parka waiting for him on it. The grateful soldier skipped on the coat and felt better, almost instantly.

Behind him, the door opened and Jamie turned to see whom had entered the room. It was a young woman, no older than himself who looked like she didn't belong on a place like this. She wore the same clothing as

him, leading Jamie to believe she was part of the security force, but the shoulder length brown hair slightly threw him off. \_Well\_, he thought, \_This isn't a military installation\_.

When the young woman saw Jamie, she jumped slightly in alarm. "Oh, hello," she uneasily said, youth apparent in the voice.

Jamie turned his body to face her, and shift his weight from left to his right. "I didn't mean any alarm. I'm new to the facility," he explained.

She walked inside the room and gently closed the door behind her. "Okay. You must be the new one on my shift then. I'm Alex."

"A pleasure," Jamie said, unsure if it sounded sincere, "I'm Jamie Carpenter. Did shift just end?"

"No," Alex said crossing her arms, "I was sent to come get you and prepare you for duty."

"You mean give my firearms and patrol route?"

"Yes."

Jamie sighed, moving towards the door. "Let's get this over with," the girl responding with a nod, hastily making her way out of the room.

He probably came across as unfriendly, yes. Jamie had spent an untold amount of time alone and didn't hold much love for anyone affiliated with the UNSC anymore. If things went in his favour, Jamie would receive a patrol where he could kick back and attempt to find his way off this shithole of an outpost. If the Covenant had found the solar system, this little mining factuality on Pluto was anything but what Jamie wanted to be on, the enemy would find this place soon enough and glass the outpost with every inhabitant Pluto had, along with himself. The odds against him surviving something like that were incredibly low. Those were the kind of odds Jamie was taught to avoid to preserve himself in the corps camps.

The two young soldiers stopped before a closed elevator door and Alex called the elevator. The two sat in momentary silence until the girl turned to Jamie, daring a question she could no longer contain.

"What unit did you belong to?" she asked, gazing at Jamie who had leaned himself against the cool, metallic surface that was the building's walls, "I heard we knew, or rather know, nothing about you."

Jamie turned his head to Alex, uncrossing his arms. "It is best that it stays that way Private," Jamie nonchalantly said.

"Hey, I'm a private first class!" Alex stated, annoyance evident, "Just because you \_may\_ have previously outranked me doesn't mean you do now."

Jamie pushed off the wall when he heard a light hum and Alex stepped back. Even at a shorter then average figure and light frame, Jamie seemed to command a presence.

"Give me your sidearm," Jamie commanded.

Alex's eyes narrowed, "What? Why do youâ€"?"

The elevator came to a lazy stop, "Fuck it!" Jamie interrupted, ripping away the pistol from the young soldier's hip holster before she could even attempt thinking about stopping him.

The doors opened slowly as Jamie cocked the pistol, chambering a round then pointing the weapon to the doors. Alex watching in shock as Jamie fired seven successive shots into the elevator car. She was about to tackle him, take him into custody, but smelt something...\_wrong\_.

"M-Methane..."

The doors opened fully and three incapacitated grunts lay crumpled, blue blood splattered along the walls. Alex turned to Jamie, who had placed the pistol in his pants along the small of his back. He calmly scanned his vision along the dead enemy.

"Elite forces have infiltrated this facility. I recommend evacuation," he said.

A/N: \_I know, short and rushed once more, but I wanted to let everyone to know that this is alive. I moved to a new country, which is why this took so long to get out. Thank you for reading and sorry for the delay.\_ \

End  
file.